

A Brief Scriptural Look at Men and Women's Equality in Marriage, Leadership and Love: The Joy of Having a Partner.

Two major problems we face in determining what is accurate and true from the Bible: Hellenism and therefore, tainted translation of Greek text.

How, when and where the problem of the world view of the role of women began.

Throughout Church History, Paul is the villain against women. A reading of his letters produces what appears to be evidence of this. The commonly excepted definition of Paul's teaching is that women are subject to their husbands as one created for the sake of man. (Women should be subject to their husbands in everything) Women therefore are second class citizens in the world, the Kingdom of God, and the Church. At the same time, Paul also wrote things that are extremely contrary to those very thoughts. (In Christ there is neither male or female) (For you are all one in Christ).

Upon closer examination we find that Paul was not a believer in the inferiority of women and he did not advocate a secondary role for women in the Church. He did not teach some notion of a divine hierarchy with husbands ruling over their wives.

Paul consistently championed the principle of sexual equality within the Church and the home. He carefully avoided those words in the Greek that would have those meanings that our modern English translations imply. He carefully selected his words about women and marriage, challenging the social roles for women in his age and the philosophy and theology that defined these roles. And yet his words have been interpreted so as to defend the very roles he challenged. How could this happen?

Those who first quoted Paul and interpreted his writings were themselves recipients of centuries of Greek philosophy. They understood Paul from the viewpoint of their own culture and customs and basically were reading Paul's words through the eyes of Aristotle. The resulting translations and understanding that were produced were Greek rather than Jewish and pagan rather than Christian.

The Greek Legacy of Distain for Women

The Greeks produced a philosophy that maintains that females are in all ways inferior to males. Greek philosophy is the source of the Western's world formalized conviction that females are inferior to men.

First expressed by the writings of Homer, it was Socrates (470-399 B.C.) who immortalized the Athenian distain toward women. Often referring to women as the 'weaker sex', he argued that being born a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal.

Though in Socrates' 'The Republic' he spoke of women sharing responsibilities and even education and training, he in no wise spoke of them being equal. He is quoted saying, 'Do you know anything at all practiced among mankind in which in all these respects the male sex is not far better than the female?' He once jokingly advised a young man, 'By all means get married. If you get a good wife, you will be happy. If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher.' He

also argued that the ideal society would not have marriage, you would just have women and children in common.

In real life, Athenian women led secluded lives. They took no part in public affairs, never appearing at meals or social occasions. Men enjoyed outdoor sports and went to the public marketplace which served as the center for city life and communication. Women went to neither. The ideal Athenian woman 'might see as little as possible, hear as little as possible, and ask as little as possible.' Conversations between husband and wife was neither valued or expected.

Why is all this important? Hang in there.

The teachings of Socrates come down to us through his star pupil, Plato (427-347 B.C.). Plato's most distinguished disciple was Aristotle (384-322). He is the one who taught the world that is was obvious the leader of a swarm of bees was a male, because a female couldn't handle it. (So much for Queen Bees)

Aristotle laid a lasting foundation for the notion that females were inferior to males and formalized the practice of sexual discrimination and offered learned authority to the belief in sexual inequality.

After Aristotle another philosopher named Zeno founded a school that greatly influence Greek and Roman society. He taught on a porch (stoa) and his followers were called Stoics. He taught that women were a distraction to men being philosophers. Procreation should be the only purpose for sex and all other passions and pleasures were to be distained. Stoics championed the value of asceticism and celibacy.

Thus the philosophers of Athens bequeathed to the world a double indictment against womanhood: From the classic period came the conviction that women are inferior to men. Therefore women are to be commanded by men and used for the pleasure of men. Then, from the Stoic philosophers came the conviction that women are a distraction and temptation to men. Therefore, women are to be avoided by men who would thereby be free to pursue those qualities that make men superior.

It's all Greek to Me.....the spread of Greek philosophy to the world.

Not all societies embraced this anti-women philosophy. Sparta was one, Egypt was another. Neither of these societies exported their philosophy like Greece and Rome. When Alexander conquered the known world, he purposely 'enlightened' his subjected peoples to Greek philosophy, inculcating Greek thought into their societies. His efforts at converting different cultures to the Greek way of life is called Hellenization. After Alexander died his successors continued this process in the regions under their control, including Egypt and Judea.

The Jewish Devaluation of Women

Paul's Gentile converts to the faith were heirs to Greek philosophy, with Aristotelian and Stoic disdain for women. His Jewish converts were heirs to the authority of the Old Testament, which offers quite a varied and often colorful collection of examples of womanhood. The stories within its pages depict a great diversity of personalities and powers among women, including the

cooperative spirit of the harlot Rahab, the gentle persuasiveness of the widow Ruth, the cleverness of Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar, the military aggressiveness of Deborah, the assassin's courage of Jael, etc.. Women in the Old Testament were not always the passive and timid souls often portrayed by Sunday School lessons!

Look to Proverbs 31 and see how the wife not only tends to her household chores but also buys real estate, manages a household staff, oversees production from a vineyard and engages in a linen garment manufacturing enterprise on the side.

The Rabbis of Judaism for the most part devalued women in their teachings. The depreciation of womanhood within Judaism was too extensive to depend solely upon interpretation of Scripture as its source. The source comes from the superior intellectually stimulating philosophy of the 'Greats', through Hellenism.

The tendency to interpret Scripture from the viewpoint of Greek philosophy was finally given highest expression in the 13th century in the writings of Thomas Aquinas whose gentle spirit and brilliant mind did more than any other to systemize Christian beliefs and to harmonize them with Greek philosophy. He interpreted the writings of Paul through the mind of Aristotle and the Greek depreciation of women became solidly infused within Christian theology. Since that time, both Catholics and Protestants have tended to read Paul's words through the eyes of pagan philosophers who live five centuries before the Apostle.

Two books to reference:

What Paul Really Said About Women, John Bristow

Why Not Women?, Loren Cunningham, David Hamilton

A few examples of discrimination:

Eph 5, the husband is the 'head' of the wife: In Greek there are two distinct words translated 'head': 1. 'arche (ar KAY). = head in terms of leadership and point of origin, usually denoting 'beginning', ie. Archives, archaeology as in old or first things. Origin: Headwaters. First: Archangel. Other English words translated: magistrate, chief, prince, ruler.

If Paul was saying that the ruler of the woman was man, he would have used this word.

The word Paul used is: 2. kephale (kef-ah-LAY) One who leads but not in the sense of a director. The one who goes BEFORE the troops, leading into battle.

The first word means boss, the second one means physical head, or the first soldier in battle.

Aristotle taught that the husband is the 'arche' of the wife, head of house hold and ruler over all his family.

Paul deliberately chose the other word.

Next words for 'be subject to'

Since Paul used the word 'kephale' rather than 'arche', then this can't mean obey, because there is no ONE to obey. A group cannot obey a group.

The Greek word for 'obey' is hupakouo (hoop-ah-KOO-o), like a child obeying his parent, or a slave his master.

There are two other Greek words that would mean submit and follow, but Paul doesn't use any of these. He uses *hupotassomai* (hoop-o-tass-o-my). Paul uses this word grammatically in the 'middle' voice that is asking for something voluntary, as in 'tend to the needs of', 'be supporting of'. In the military sense, it is taking your place in the phalanx of soldiers with no reference to rank or status. It was an equal sharing of the task.

Thus Paul said 'hupotassomai to one another', and 'wives are to hupotassomai your husband'. = bear one another's burdens, support one another. Husbands are to agape their wife.

The word for love that Jesus used for our relationship to God and one another was agape. Agape is not the emotional part of love or the sensual part of love or the friendship part of love (all different words in the Greek). Agape is attitude and action. In fact it is synonymous with *hupotassomai* in a parallel way.

Another example of mistranslation is the word for 'minister'. Though the Greek word is the same, the translation was different according to gender. When referring to a male, he was a 'minister'. When referring to a female, it was translated 'servant'. Yes, these meanings can be similar, but it definitely cast the shadow of Greek philosophy in defining the woman differently and in a lesser light and authority.

For every scripture that comes to mind about the wife being subject, or that women are inferior, there is an answer in the translation. There are even symbols/words in Greek (which doesn't have punctuation) that if this symbol is added, it means 'no way' or 'What!?' or 'Nonsense!' When Paul quotes a statement like, 'let women be silent in the church', this symbol makes the point that is opposite of what it means if it is left out.

Paul used the relationship of Christ and the church as a model for Christian marriage. Christ is the head (*kephale*) of the Church which is His body. Christ became head of the Church by giving Himself up for the Church, even to the point of suffering death for those He loved. Christ is not the head of the Church in order to rule over it.

- Jesus called them to Him and said to them, 'You know those who are supposed to rule (*archein*) over the Gentiles lord it over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and even the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:42-45

Christ's aim was not to boss the Church, but to purify it and sanctify it. In this sense husbands are to be head of their wives, not to lord over them but to love and serve them, just as wives are to be supportive of and serve their husbands.

Read a more accurate rendering of Eph. 5 from page 46 in. 'What Paul Said...'

If any questions, read the books than then we will talk. I have barely scratched the surface.